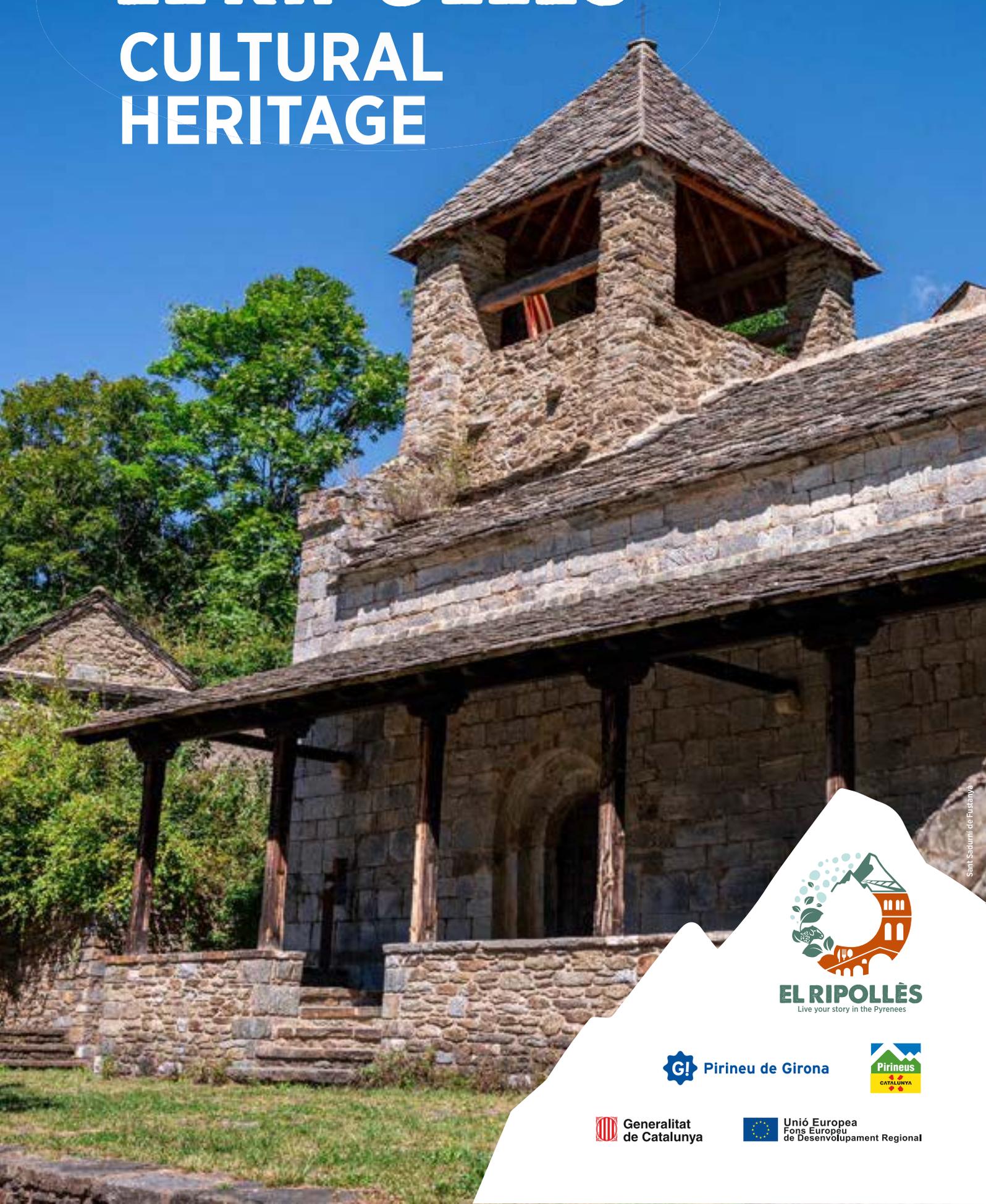


# EL RIPOLLÈS

## CULTURAL HERITAGE



Sant Sadurn de Noya



**EL RIPOLLÈS**  
Live your story in the Pyrenees



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# INTRODUCTION



Monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll

The history and culture of El Ripollès will captivate you and beckon you to explore it further. Here you'll learn about the origins of Catalonia, about the peculiarities of our various regions, about a way of life and a sense of identity based on shepherding, about rural life and trades, about the birth of the Catalan ironworks...

Plus, with almost a hundred monuments to visit, El Ripollès is home to one of the densest and most exceptional concentrations of Romanesque architecture in Europe. Wherever you go you'll find legendary heritage elements from over a thousand years ago hidden in places just waiting to be discovered.

## El Ripollès has one of the densest concentrations of Romanesque architecture in Europe

The three main sites are the monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll, the monastery of Sant Joan de les Abadesses and the monastery of Sant Pere de Camprodon.

**In El Ripollès, its heritage is its people, its nature and the cultural attributes that imbue it with personality. This Pyrenean region offers the peace and quiet you deserve, so you can get some well-earned rest.**



# GENERAL INFORMATION

El Ripollès has been a land of art and culture since ancient times. Its finest examples still stand today, so that we can enjoy this fine Romanesque heritage.

As a Pyrenean region, El Ripollès has historically been an area of refuge. By the end of the 8th century, a network of

castles and watchtowers was likely already being built to help protect its inhabitants. Some of the best places to find this legacy are Mataplana, Rocabruna, Queralbs and Ribes de Freser castles, and Campelles Tower. They were all built in strategic locations, from which you can enjoy spectacular panoramic views.





Mataplana Castle in Gombrèn

El Ripollès is home to a remarkable number of Romanesque churches, most of them dating from the late 11th and mid-12th centuries.

Although part of a markedly religious and political strategy, following patterns of repopulation and evangelisation, each responds to different needs that make it unique. Most of them were the heart of their village and daily religious life, while others were located in more isolated redoubts, even on the top of mountains.

By visiting them and appreciating their particular features and curiosities, you'll learn about our artistic heritage and understand that these structures are an inseparable part of this region.

Scattered throughout the county you will also find hermitages, sanctuaries and chapels high up in the mountains or hidden among leafy paths. They all lead us to the world of pilgrimage, worship and the healing of illness and disease.

From the year 1000 onwards, following the Pau i Treva agreements promoted by Abbot-Bishop Oliba, the local path network was

However, it was not until the middle of the 9th century that the great task of repopulating and organising the whole area began. In such times of revolt and upheaval, the figure of Count Wilfred the Hairy is key to understanding the new distribution of land: a division into counties that would come to be known as Catalunya Vella (Old Catalonia).

## As a Pyrenean region, El Ripollès has been a refuge since the days of old



Church of Santa Cecília in Molló



Shrine and church of Sant Pere de Montgrony in Gombrèn



overhauled to include new functional paths. The aim was to improve trade relations, social life and pilgrimage, as well as military operation. In the border region of El Ripollès, bridges became essential architecture.

Most were humpback with two or three arches, which meant they could be wider, as can be observed on **La Cabreta Bridge (Campdevàrol)**, which owes its name to its principal, Count Oliba Cabreta. This was not the only bridge to La Cerdanya; you could get there over the **Pont Nou in Camprodon**, one of the highest bridges in the region. Others provided access to a village entrance, such as the **Pont Vell in Sant Joan de les Abadesses**, or were located between roads, such as the **Pont Vell de La Rovira** in Sant Pau de Segúries.

And there are still remains of the **Roman road of Capsacosta** in Sant Pau de Segúries, a branch of the Via Augusta that served as the main route between Besalú and France via El Coll d'Ares.



Pont Vell in Sant Joan de les Abadesses



Pont Nou in Camprodon



Roman road of Capsacosta in Sant Pau de Segúries



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## Unique villages steeped in culture

In El Ripollès you can discover the essence of high-mountain medieval villages and be transported back in time. Narrow streets, stone houses with slate roofs and original wood features. You'll fall in love with the beauty of these picture-postcard villages as you stroll along their streets, which brim with culture at every turn.

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### Dòrria

in Toses, a hamlet some 1,550 metres above sea level, which has conserved the charm of high-mountain villages. Declared a Cultural Asset of National Interest for its beauty and the church of Sant Víctor, home to Romanesque paintings from the 12th century.

### Setcases

a picturesque village with carefully restored stone houses and cobbled streets, exemplifies the essence of Pyrenean high-mountain villages. It is one of the gateways to Capçaleres del Ter i del Freser Natural Park.



### Pardines

a quintessentially Pyrenean village, located in the heart of Capçaleres del Ter i del Freser Natural Park, under the shade of one of the most emblematic mountains in El Ripollès, Mount Taga. The village's Romanesque atmosphere and cobbled streets are living testimony to its storied past.



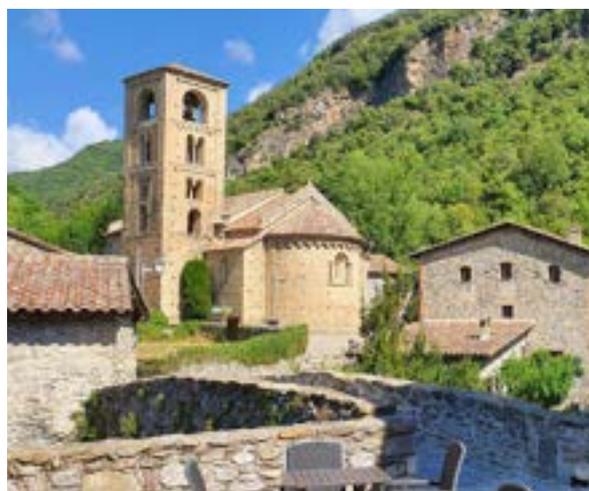


### La Roca de Vilallonga de Ter

a village full of history that still conserves the essence of its medieval layout, from a time when it was surrounded by the defensive walls of its old castle. Now mostly lost to history, the sole remnant of the walled enclosure is the chapel of La Pietat.

### Beget

is a small village in the Camprodon valley that has not lost its majestic rural essence in the Romanesque style. It is home to the church of Sant Cristòfol and its *Christ in Majesty*, one of Catalonia's finest Romanesque sculptures. In 2021, it was included on the exclusive list of Spain's Most Beautiful Villages.



### Vallfogona del Ripollès

is surrounded by beautiful countryside, woods and paths that make it an ideal destination for hiking and nature outings. Its well-preserved medieval old town consists of a central square around which the old houses, which have retained their original thresholds and balconies, were built in a circle.



# 3D EXPERIENCES

Thanks to the advances made in 3D technology, you can now take virtual tours of 22 churches in 19 towns and villages in El Ripollès. On them, you can discover some of the county's most interesting cultural and tourism treasures.

**3D tours allow you to explore legendary heritage in a way that's interactive and highly educational**

And to really get a feel for the legends, history and culture of El Ripollès in an educational and interactive manner, the county is home to a wide variety of guided tours, museums and interpretation centres.

**Ripoll Ethnographic Museum** >

**Church of Sant Pere in Ripoll** >

**Old parish church in Sant Pau de Segúries** >

**Church of La Mare de Déu de les Neus in Espinavell** >

**Sant Bartomeu del Baell** >



Virtual tour of the church of Sant Cristòfol in Toses



**Sant Cristòfol  
de Beget**



**Sant Cristòfol  
de Toses**



**Sant Cristòfol  
de Ventolà**



**Sant Esteve  
de Llanars**



**Sant Jaume  
de Queralbs**



**Sant Julià  
de Tegurà**



**Sant Marcel  
de Planès**



**Sant Martí  
de Surroca**



**Sant Sadurní  
de Fustanyà**



**Sant Víctor  
de Dòrria**



**Santa Llúcia  
de Puigmal**



**Santa Magdalena  
de Puigsac**



**Santa Maria  
de Matamala**



**Shrine of La Salut  
in Vallfogona de  
Ripollès**



**Sant Pere d'Aüria**



**Sant Pere  
de Montgrony**



**Sant Miquel  
de Setcases**



**Chapel of La Mare  
de Déu del Carme  
in Batet**



# AUDIO GUIDES. MONASTERIES OF EL RIPOLLÈS, A THOUSAND YEARS OF HERITAGE

Behold a millennium of cultural heritage on essential visits to the **monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll**, the **monastery of Sant Joan de les Abadesses** and the **Pont Nou bridge and monastery in Camprodon**. You can delve into the heritage, nature and history of these three villages by touring them while listening to the audio guide **Monasteries of El Ripollès, a Thousand Years of Heritage**, available at tourist information offices.

**L'audioguia us farà gaudir d'un recorregut patrimonial, natural i històric pels municipis**



Abbatial Palace of Sant Joan de les Abadesses



El Ripollès is home to one of the largest concentrations of Romanesque art in Europe, with more than a hundred monuments scattered throughout its towns and villages.

To trace its origins, we have to go back to the first millennium and the Middle Ages, when numerous religious communities were founded all over Europe and monasteries became the leading centres of culture on the continent. Monks copied and created marvellous books in their scriptoriums, and assembled massive libraries filled with contemporary and ancient books, including those from other civilisations, which allowed them to learn about the world, the great work of God. In order to structure the religious life around them, they imparted systems of government and human relations of the Frankish world. Their buildings and their furniture for worship remain genuine treasures of Romanesque art today.

These monastic communities also reached El Ripollès: Santa Maria de Ripoll, Sant Joan de Ripoll (later called Sant Joan de les Abadesses) and Sant Pere de Camprodon are Benedictine monasteries, founded before the year 1000 by counts such as Wilfred the Harry in order to repopulate the valley.

They combined spiritual life, cultural life, civil power struggles and the difficulty of human

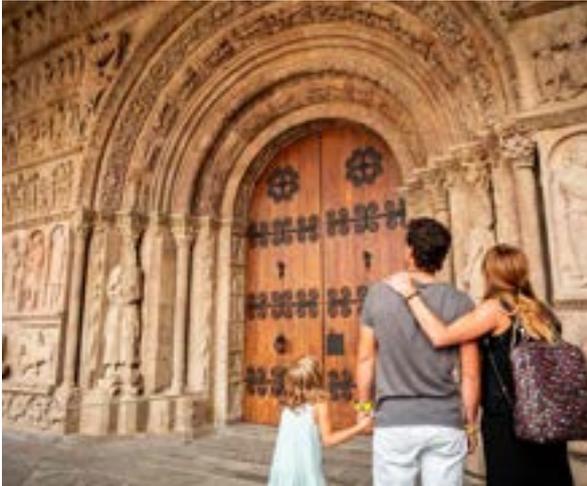
relations. Even today they preserve their magnificence, are active meeting places for the Christians of El Ripollès and serve as a sign of the villagers' identity.

Great historical figures brought grandeur to the locale. Ripoll, county town until 1162, was the home of Abbot-Bishop Oliba in the 11th century and later Ramon Berenguer IV, a key figure in understanding mid-12th-century artistic heritage. The monastery portal – a UNESCO World Heritage Site candidate – and the cloister are gems of this golden age. In the case of Sant Joan de les Abadesses, female Benedictine power came in the form of Abbess Emma. Its medieval artistic wealth can be seen in the abbey museum and inside the church, which houses the sculpture the *Holy Mystery*.

Camprodon, which aesthetically is more in keeping with the Cistercian order, stands out for the elegance and sobriety of its 12th-century church. Its artistic quality is also evident in a capital from its former cloister, preserved in the Girona Art Museum

Therefore, when we think of El Ripollès's Romanesque art, we inevitably think of three major monasteries that exemplify the region's medieval cultural splendour.





Portal of the monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll

## Monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll

One of Catalonia's finest examples of Romanesque abbeys is the **monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll**. It was founded in the late 11th century by Count Wilfred the Hairy and features a majestic 12th-century Romanesque portal that is a candidate for inclusion as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is also known for its historical role in the founding of Catalonia and as a mausoleum for Catalan nobility.

## Monastery of Sant Joan de les Abadesses

In the **monastery of Sant Joan de les Abadesses**, the first of its kind for women in Catalonia, the Benedictine power came from Abbess Emma. Its church is home to the sculpture of the descent from the cross known as the *Santíssim Misteri* or "Holy Mystery".



Monastery of Sant Joan de les Abadesses



## Monastery of Sant Pere de Camprodon

The **monastery of Sant Pere de Camprodon**, founded by Count Wilfred II, is known for the elegance and sobriety of its 12th-century church.



## Great little treasures of El Ripollès

Beyond the architecture, El Ripollès also offers works of art in situ, inside the churches.

Noteworthy are the polychrome wooden image known as the Majesty of Beget, a major work of Catalan Romanesque sculpture; the altar frontispiece of Sant Esteve de Llanars, the only one in the region still on its original site, and the murals of Sant Cristòfol de Toses and Sant Víctor de Dòrria (Toses), two outstanding examples of Ripollès Romanesque painting that you should not miss.

One of the most recent finds are the wall paintings in Sant Pere (Ripoll), where some forty polychrome dragons were found in the vaults inside the church. An example of Ripollès late Gothic that will astound you.

Others, also of great value, are on display in the major medieval museums, the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC) and the Museu Episcopal de Vic. The MNAC in Barcelona is home to the altar frontispiece from Sant Marcel de Planès (Planoles), a church which is also outstanding for its architecture dating from the late 11th century.

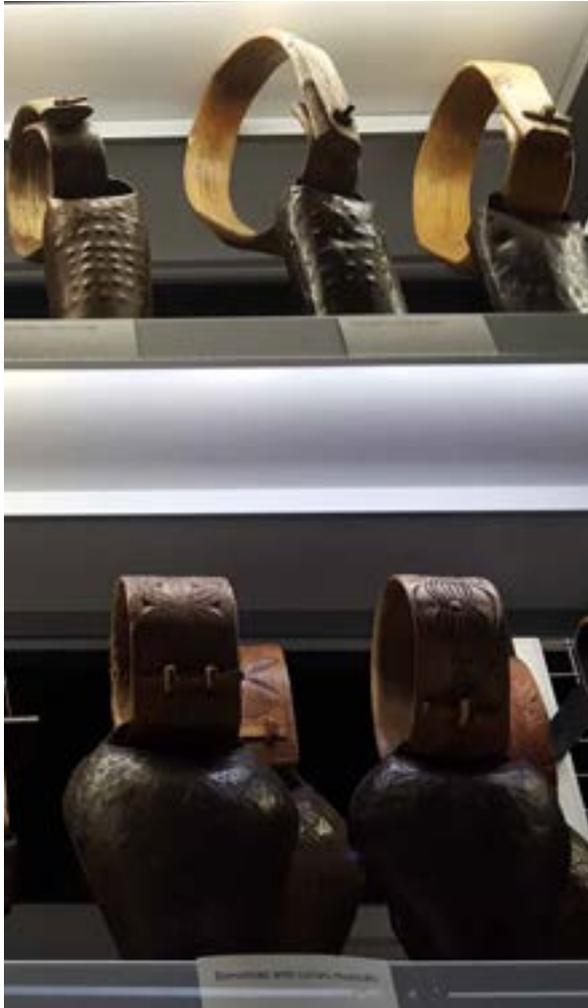
In Vic you can find the wooden image of Our Lady of Santa Maria de Matamala (Les Llosses), of a similar style to the Madonna of Montserrat, which still conserves part of its original polychrome.



Church of Sant Esteve de Llanars



# GUIDED TOURS



## Museums to discover a fascinating past

Don't miss the guided tours of the Ripoll Ethnographic Museum, where you will enjoy a fascinating experience discovering the customs, traditions and culture of El Ripollès and the Girona Pyrenees thanks to specialised guides with expertise in cultural heritage. It features collections related to shepherding, rural life, popular religiosity, Catalan ironworks and wrought iron, and firearms.

**On the guided tours you will relive the daily life and trades of our ancestors**



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The museum also organises guided tours of the **Scriptorium** and the **Farga Palau ironworks forge in Ripoll**. In the Scriptorium you can delve into the cultural past of the town and the important role played by the monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll in the 10th, 11th and 12th centuries in the production and copying of manuscripts. The **Fes de monjo copista (Become an Amanuensis)** workshop allows both children and adults to emulate the old monks and put into practice what they have learned from the exhibition.

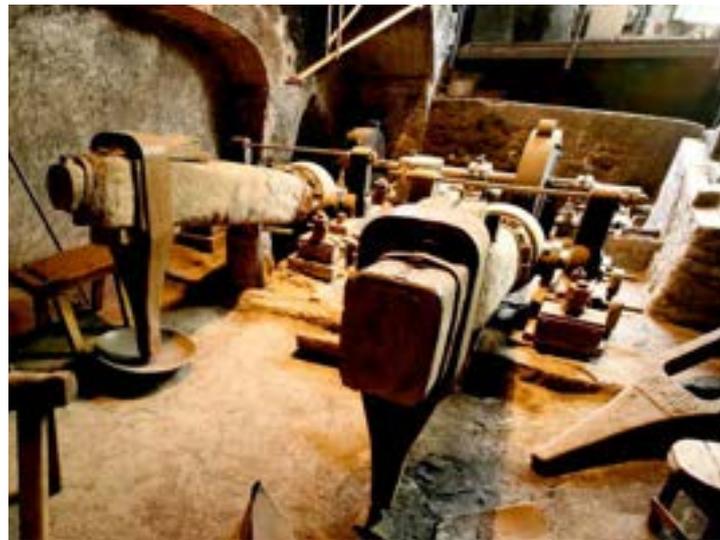
The **Farga Palau**, founded as an ironworks forge in the 17th century, was active for five centuries before its closure in 1978. It is Catalonia's finest example of the production system known internationally as Farga Catalana, and the only one open to the public. It highlights the industrial heritage of ironworking.

In Campdevàrol you can also visit the **Molí Gros and Pyrfer centre**, where you can learn about iron's legacy, from nail-makers through to today's metallurgical industry.

At the **Ogassa Mining Museum** you can discover the industrial heritage related to coal mines.



Scriptorium



Farga Palau



Ogassa Mining Museum





Count Arnau Museum in Gombrèn

Discover the legend of Count Arnau, one of Catalonia's mythical figures, at the Myth of Count Arnau Interpretation Centre, in Sant Joan de les Abadesses, and the Count Arnau Museum, in Gombrèn.

You can also visit the **Isaac Albéniz Museum** in Camprodon, which allows you to see how the musician lived, and the **Vall de Núria Rack Railway Exhibition** in Ribes de Freser, where you can see the old carriages that were used to make the journey up to Núria.

The monasteries of **Santa Maria de Ripoll**, **Sant Joan de les Abadesses** and **Sant**

**Pere de Camprodon**, which still preserve their magnificence and remain a sign of the identity of the villages' inhabitants, are well worth a visit.

In Sant Joan de les Abadesses you can also visit the exhibition space of the refurbished **Abbatial Palace**, which also houses the Myth of Count Arnau Interpretation Centre.

And in the **Cal Marquès Cultural Space** in Camprodon you will find a permanent exhibition on The Retreat, with all the artefacts discovered in the area that tie back to this historical episode.



# FESTIVALS AND TRADITIONS

Hiking through El Ripollès, you'll enjoy all the countryside, nature, history and culture you find along the way and you'll discover little spots and charming villages with a rural past that evoke the essence of how our ancestors lived as you pass through unspoilt areas. Many of these villages still carry on ancestral traditions, which have now become major cultural attractions, drawing visitors from all over the world every year.

**Ancestral traditions are carried on and have become cultural attractions**



La Gala dance in Campdevànol



Sheep Shearing and Rural Wedding Festival, Ripoll



The dynamic nature of the county is borne out by its extensive calendar of popular activities that allow you to feel like you belong to El Ripollès throughout the year.

**Sheep Shearing  
and Rural Wedding  
Festival, Ripoll**



**Espinavell  
Horse Fair**



**Holy Mysteries  
Procession,  
Camprodon**



**International  
Sheep Dog Trials,  
Ribes de Freser**



**Clavetaires,  
Campdevàrol Music  
and Dance Festival**



Espinavell Horse Fair

These are just a few examples of unique, authentic local festivals, but the programme of activities is much more extensive. [See it here.](#)



# GASTRONOMY

One of the cultural hallmarks of any region is its food and drink. This is the reflection of an extraordinary legacy of knowledge, wisdom and the great cooking carried out in kitchens for generations and generations among the people of El Ripollès, who have managed to bring the experience of mountain cuisine, produce and preparation to the present day. The county's standing as a land of rural life and good food is

backed by the guarantee mark "Producte del Ripollès, which certifies that its products are rooted in our mountain character and are the result of a firm commitment to work the land and maintain our identity. These are the very delicacies that speak to us of the mountains and the plain, the countryside and rural life, and the larder and the bakery.



In the county's [more than 160 restaurants](#), one of which boasts a Michelin star, you can sample our typical dishes based on locally sourced products. Milk and dairy products; pies; aromatic plants, herbal teas and seasonings; *llangonisseta* and other pork sausages; ratafia liqueur; garden vegetables and berries; the remarkable Camprodon Valley potatoes, produced at high altitudes and boasting exceptional culinary qualities; jams; cooked dishes; craft beer dating back a thousand years; El Ripollès honey, with its pronounced, sweet taste; and eggs from the county... You can taste excellent meats such as El Ripollès colt, which is tender and full of nutrients, as well as El Ripollès mutton, lamb, and veal from the authentic Pyrenean brown breed, a guarantee of quality and exquisite flavour. All these authentic products are served for your pleasure in establishments with excellent reviews in the best restaurant guides.

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## Ripollès is a land of farming and good food, with an exquisite identity

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And to demonstrate exactly who we are, how we cook and the way we produce food, you will find a busy calendar of events linked to gastronomy and local produce throughout the year, including the European Cheese Fair in Ripoll, the Potato Fair and Market in Molló and Vilallonga de Ter, the Herbs and Mushrooms Fair in Setcases, the Biscuit Fair in Camprodon, the Honey and Cheese Festival in La Vall de Ribes, and the El Ripollès Cheese Tastings.

